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Message in a bottle

By: Khalid A-H Ansari **Date:** 2009-12-15 **Place:** Sydney

Protestor plans to swim 9,000 km, from Japan to US, in plastic bottle

The 100,000 protestors at the climate summit in Copenhagen may have made an eloquent case for their concerns but, for sheer drama, Sunday's demonstration pales into insignificance compared to the missionary zeal of an Australian environmentalist.



khalid@scope Australian Richard Pain, a keen ocean swimmer, is planning to swim from Japan to the US in a 6-metre plastic bottle to raise awareness of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, a floating mass of plastic junk threatening the Ocean.

The bottle will be towed by a boat on the 9,000-km Odyssey with his fiancée, Natasha, pregnant with their first child, on board.

Made from thousands of used water bottles, the huge bottle will act as a shark cage and a reminder of the plastic waste in the Ocean in an area approximating Australia's vast Northern Territory.

"I realise it's completely mad," the 45-year old filmmaker Pain said over the weekend of his planned man-in-a-bottle message to humankind.

He is planning to sell his Sydney home to raise some of the money needed for his mind-boggling undertaking.
"I'm aware that there is a lot of fatigue in the broader population.



Global Warning: Richard Pain wants to raise awareness of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch.

This is to try and raise awareness by doing something more compelling. It's like trying to do an environmental version of (the film) Super Size Me.

"I want to create that iconic media image that everybody picks up and says, "Oh my God, there's a man in the middle of the ocean in a gigantic water bottle."

Pain is also making a documentary about his mission.

Greatly disturbed for years with the massive garbage patch trapped by currents in the North Pacific, Pain told the Sydney Morning Herald, "You look down into it and it's nightmarish.

All these birds are eating it and dying, and now it's entering the food chain."

Apart from increasing awareness about pollution, Pain wants to raise Aus\$1 million (Rs 4 crore) for research into

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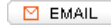
the North Pacific Gyre, the body of water filling with plastic waste.

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Pain is training daily for his record-breaking expedition but expects it will take 18 months for him to be strong enough to undertake his record-breaking feat, which is expected to take 45 days.

Pain said, "The ideal would be for me to walk in the water in Japan, the land of plastic, start swimming and emerge months later on Santa Monica beach (in California) with Richard Branson handing me a cheque and looking at his watch and saying: 'You made it with five minutes to spare!'"

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